



The impacts of service-learning on attitudes toward social participation: The case of the Koudoukan Project at the Hiroshima University of Economics

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Summary

This study examines the impact of service-learning on attitudes toward social participation. A longitudinal questionnaire survey was conducted among service-learning participants and others at the Hiroshima University of Economics. As a result, participants acquired a sense of social effectiveness, and supports from the teacher(s) were effective on students' learning.

According to the Central Council for Education report: *The Future of Higher Education in Japan*, the mission of higher education in Japan is to develop citizens who acquire not only expertise in their major

but also broad culture, civic responsibility, and morality, and qualities to sustain and actively improve society (Central Council for Education, 2005). Thus, for higher education in Japan, it is critical to develop citizens who actively sustain and improve society. Responding to this report, many educational institutions have developed new pedagogies and have engaged their students in experiential education such as service-learning and volunteer activities.

This study examines how students learn citizenship through a service-learning program. There are as many definitions of citizenship as there are scholars and practitioners. In this study, attitudes toward social participation are proposed as one of the concepts of citizenship. The purpose of this study is to examine what kind of activities in service-learning are more effective on attitudes toward social participation. Service-learning produces the best outcomes when meaningful service activities are related to course material through reflection activities such as directed writings, group discussions, and presentations (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p.153).

The study found that service-learning experiences do not automatically foster attitudes toward social participation. Reflection, “the intentional consideration of experience in light of particular learning objectives” (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997), is one of the most important factors in service-learning. Hatcher and Bringle (1997) refer to the role of teachers and instructors in reflecting on experiences and bridging the gap between service and learning. The findings in this study empirically support the importance of the role of teachers and instructors in service-learning.

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